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# John and Hannah Goddard

By REV. WM. H. LYON, D. D.





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## JOHN AND HANNAH GODDARD.

BY REV. WILLIAM H. LYON, D.D.

Read before the Hannah Goddard Chapter of the D. A. R., Dec. 11th, 1902, and the Brookline Historical Society, Feb. 25th, 1903.

THE evacuation of Boston on the 17th of March, 1776, was the greatest victory which the Continental troops had gained up to that date. Nearly a year had passed since the days of Lexington and Concord, and just nine months since Bunker Hill. The attempt to conquer Canada had failed disastrously, and the eyes of the combatants on both sides of the ocean were directed to the struggle in and around Boston. There had seemed little prospect of American success when the siege began, and as time passed and no change in the condition had been effected, the prospect did not grow brighter.

When the spring began to open, however, Washington began to stir, and the result was a feat of engineering which both astonished and dismayed the too confident enemy.

On Monday night, March 4th, a heavy cannonade was opened upon Boston from Roxbury, which was as hotly returned by the enemy, who had no suspicions of what it covered. About seven o'clock two thousand men marched to Dorchester Heights. Eight hundred formed an advance guard, followed by carts with intrenching tools, then came twelve hundred more troops, and last of all a train of three hundred carts, carrying fascines and hay. Every possible precaution had been taken to prevent discovery. The wheels of the carts were wound with hay, and the oxen shod with felt, and no whips were allowed to be used, the poor uninterested beasts being prodded along with sharpened sticks. So, though there was a bright moonlight, the British were completely taken by surprise when they beheld, the next morning, the fortifications which made Boston untenable. "Good God!" exclaimed General Howe, "these fellows have done more work in one night than I could have made my army do in three months. What shall I do?" At first he undertook to bombard the intrenchments, but his gunners could not fire so high, though they sunk the hind wheels of their cannon in the ground. Washington hoped they would attack him, in which case troops that were waiting on the other side of Boston would have assailed the city. "But the renowned Lord Percy Disap-

pointed us," wrote John Sullivan to John Adams, "for he, instead of his Prospect Glass, took a multiplying Glass & viewed our people from the Castle, & made them fifty thousand, when, in fact, we had only sent on four thousand." The result was that, to their humiliation, the whole British force, in great disorder and confusion, abandoned the city, leaving over two hundred cannons, thousands of muskets, and great stores of powder, lead, and other military necessities, and betook themselves to their fleet. So ended the siege of Boston.

With the commanders of the troops who occupied those decisive Dorchester Heights we need not now concern ourselves. Our business is with him who so efficiently and successfully organized and conducted the wagon train which bore the materials for the fortifications,—John Goddard of Brookline. He was already well known in his own town as a patriot and had been appointed to various posts of service in the preparations for the Revolution. We find in the town records that on December 15th, 1767, John Goddard was chosen one of five persons to "be a Committee to prepare a form for subscription against Receiving of those European superfluities and make Report" as to those "superfluities." On the 20th of November in that year Parliament had laid a duty on paint, paper, glass and tea imported into the colonies, and the Americans proposed to defeat it by simply going without those articles. On December 11th, 1772, Mr. Goddard was one of a Committee of seven appointed "to take under consideration the Violation and Infringements of the Rights of the Colonists and of this Province in particular," and "to be a Standing Committee of Communication and correspond with the Town of Boston and any other Town in the Subject of our Present Difficulties." The grievances referred to are stated at length in the minutes of the 28th of the same month. As the sky grows darker with the clouds of war we find Mr. Goddard appointed (September 1st, 1774), on another committee "to Examine into the state of Said Town as to There Military preparations for War, in case of a Sudden attack from our Enemies"; and on the 27th made one of two delegates "to attend in the Provincial Congress, to be held at Concord . . . to meet the Delegates from the other Towns in the Province and unite with them in all Such Measures as shall Appear to you to have a tendency to promote the Welfare of this Province and to recover and Secure the first Rights and Liberties of America." Again, on January 1st,

1775, he is made one of a committee to see that the vote "To comply with the Recommendation as set forth by the Continental and Provincial Congress . . . be Duly Observed."

We find also that at a meeting of the committee of safety at the house of Captain Stedman, in Cambridge, November 2d, 1774, it was "Voted: unanimously, that Mr. John Goddard of Brookline be waggon master for the army, and that Captain White inform him of his choice by the province"; and again, in records dated "Head Quarters, May 15th, 1775," "This is to certify, that Mr. John Goddard has been appointed by the joint committee of safety and supplies as waggon master to this colony, to convey such articles of stores from one part of this colony to another as the public exigency may require, under the direction of the commissary general and the ordnance store keeper, and that such other waggons or drivers are to be employed as he shall recommend for that purpose." It is proof of the efficiency and success of Mr. Goddard in this important service of transportation that it was recorded in the Orderly Book of Captain Abijah Wyman's company in Colonel William Prescott's regiment, on August 9th, 1775, that "Mr. John Goddard appointed By the Commander in Chief wagon master gen'l to the army of the twelve united Colonies and is to Be obeyed as such." He had power to seize such wagons and horses or oxen as he needed for the public service and assign prices for them.

Before this appointment he had evidently been known to General Washington as a reliable patriot, for we read in the same book, under date of April 21st, "That the two hogsheds of powder in the possession of Mr. Pigion be lodged with John Goddard at Brookline, for the use of the American troops," and again, on April 24th, "that General Thomas do send an officer, with a sufficient guard, to convey a mortar and ordnance stores to Mr. John Goddard in Brookline where the powder is now stored." Before this the powder that went to Concord had been stored in some bushes on Mr. Goddard's farm, and it was related as remarkable, if not providential, that the lightning one stormy night struck and split the tree at the foot of which the powder was hidden without causing any explosion. It was soon found, however, that the place of hiding was becoming too well known, and the powder was carried to Concord, followed one unlucky day by the British. The cannons, however, remained and were carried around through Heath street in Roxbury to Dorchester

Heights, leaving the old barn which had sheltered them to stand as a witness to this day. Mr. Goddard was urged by General Washington to conduct the transportation of his army to New York, and to remain with him to the end of the war, in which case he would have had the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel to begin with, but he answered that he could not leave his wife and children, and having aided in driving the enemy from his own province resigned and spent the rest of his life upon his farm.

At this time Mr. Goddard had fourteen children, of whom the youngest was born three weeks after that famous moonlight march of his father. Two were born later. Of these sixteen all but one, a daughter, were the children of his second wife, Hannah Seaver (from whom this chapter is so appropriately named). She was born July 27th, 1735, and died May 31st, 1821. To have lived eighty-six years and to have borne fifteen children in less than twenty-five years argues a strong constitution, especially when we consider the labor and exposure which the faithful wives of our forefathers underwent upon their farms. Fortunately, the rearing of children in those days was much simpler than it is now. Had Mrs. Goddard had the same number of sleepless nights and anxious days over boarding schools and dancing schools, bringing out the girls, and putting out the boys to various lines of business, which now are the lot of the hapless matrons of the twentieth century, she might have had fewer days and nights than make up eighty-six years. Whether she had the experience of one of our Brookline mothers, who bore nine children and had eight of them down with the measles at once, in four rooms, two in a room, we are not told. Her maternal methods were simple, if we may judge from the reply made to some one who asked what she did with so many children, that she "put leather aprons on them all and turned them all out to play." All was not play, however, with the young Goddards, for we are told of John, the eldest son, that before he was nine years old he had committed to memory and recited to Rev. Joseph Jackson the whole book of Proverbs, with its thirty-one chapters and perhaps six thousand verses, and the one hundredth and nineteenth Psalm, which has one hundred and seventy-six verses. He came rightly by his love of the Bible, however, for his mother was the grand-daughter of Deacon Benjamin White of the old church in Brookline. Her mother, Hannah White, for whom she was named, died less than seven years after she was born, so that she had to leave her

daughter's education to other than her natural guardian; but whoever received her did her work well, for Hannah grew up to be much beloved and respected, and was long remembered after she was gone. Like "the mother of Zebedee's children," her life sank from public fame into the lives of her husband and children, but it was true then of America, as Napoleon afterwards said of France, that "what the country needed most was mothers."

The name Godard, though apparently French, is found in England before the Conquest, and is registered in Domesday Book as found in Wiltshire. There certainly lived in the thirteenth century Walter Godard Ville, who was levied upon by Henry III. for horses and arms. His son dropped the last part of this name, and Godard continued henceforth to be the family title. In the sixteenth century the line of descent grows clearer, being indeed settled by law, and the founder of St. John's College, Oxford, in 1555, becomes the undoubted ancestor of the Goddards of America.

Our John Goddard came of a sturdy republican and militant stock. He was the son of William, who emigrated to this country in 1665, and settled in Watertown, Mass. His father, Edward, was a wealthy farmer, educated at Oxford, and a commissioner under the Commonwealth. Most of his family fought with the King, but he chose the side of Parliament. It is supposed that William shared his father's political opinions and that it was persecution on this account that drove him to this country. If this be true, his love of free institutions cost him dear. According to the English law of that day, he was allowed to bring only five pounds in money with him, and the rest of his property, which he had stored in London, was burned in the great fire. He found himself, therefore, in straitened circumstances in a new land, and began to teach Latin and other branches of learning. We find the following record of this:—

"March 27, 1680. These are to certify that Mr. William Goddard of Watertowne whence the said towne by covenanting agreed to teach such children as should be sent to him to learn the rules of the Latin tongue, hath those accomplishments which render him capable to discharge the trust (in that respect) committed to him.

"(Signed) John Sherman, Pastor."

It was his third son, Joseph, born in London, who came to Brookline in 1680, to a part of it then included in Roxbury, and bought a strip of land extending from what is now Clyde street to

Jamaica Pond. To this he added, as deeds still extant show, fifty acres bought from Daniel Oliver in 1712, and in the same year fifty more from William Marean. On this land his descendants have lived ever since. There was a lane leading to Jamaica Plain and a cart road through the estate now owned by Mr. Moses Williams to what is now called Warren street. This land passed to his fourth son, John, who, on his removal to Worcester in 1745, left the farm to John, the eldest son of his second wife, his first wife having had no children. This was the John Goddard of whom we have been speaking, and in whom the sturdy republican strain which was in his great-great-grandfather Edward of Cromwell's day and which sent his great-grandfather William to this country, came once more into action. The fugitive from King Charles II. avenged himself in the person of his great-grandson upon King George III. It was by this John Goddard that the older of the two houses was built in 1761, the more primitive one of 1680 having by this time earned an honorable discharge. The original clapboards, fastened with English hand-cut nails, are still in their places.

While we have the family tree before us, let us trace out some of its later branches. The eldest son of the Revolutionary John, who bore the same name, was a delicate boy, though, like many a youth of the kind, he lived long and passed through much. We have seen what he could endure in the way of learning and reciting Scripture. Educated as a physician, he became a surgeon on one of our armed vessels, was captured with it, carried to a West Indian prison, almost died of a fever, escaped, was captured with the vessel to which he had swum, taken back to the same prison, escaped again, and reached home on a Sunday morning so changed that his own mother did not know him. This was doing fairly well for a "delicate" young man! He never fully recovered from this experience, however. He married Susanna, daughter of John Heath of Brookline, and settled in Portsmouth, N. H. He was chosen United States Senator and Governor of the state, but declined, and advised his sons always to decline public office. After the death of Susanna Heath, he married a daughter of President Langdon of Harvard College. He died in 1829 at the age of seventy-three.

Meantime, his younger brother Joseph had settled upon his father's farm and died there in 1846 at the age of eighty-five. He married Mary Aspinwall, by whom he had eleven children.



The tenth of these, Abijah Warren Goddard, spent his long life of ninety-seven years upon the original farm, building the present home in 1857. He died August 12th, 1900, honored and beloved, after having held many offices in the town and been deacon of the First Parish for forty-four years. His daughter, Mrs. Eliza Watson and her daughter, Mary L. Watson, are the sixth generation to occupy the old farm, the latter continuing in many useful works the patriotic spirit of her line. It is interesting to think that this Goddard with whom we have lived and talked, connects us directly, through his father, with the Revolution.

Abijah's elder brother, Samuel Aspinwall Goddard, seems to have inherited in especial force the sturdy patriotic spirit of his English ancestors and of the Revolutionary John. Circumstances took him to England, where he became a naturalized citizen, but he was a fearless and persistent advocate of the Northern cause in a land where there was great need of defense and explanation. John Bright made special acknowledgment of the help he had received from this loyal American, and it is clear that he did much toward preventing the British from recognizing the Southern Confederacy.

From Nathaniel, a younger brother of the Revolutionary John, came Miss Louisa Mary Goddard, who lives in fulness of years at Chestnut Hill, while from Samuel, the third son of the much-suffering John of the West Indian experiences, comes Miss Julia Goddard, an honored member of this chapter. As Samuel married Mehetable, the youngest daughter of that William Davis who rode through the British barriers on the Neck and around by way of Brookline and Cambridge to warn the people of Concord that the British were coming while Paul Revere was riding from Charlestown,—a feat for which he has never received due credit,—it will be seen that from her two grandfathers Miss Goddard comes naturally by her patriotic enthusiasm.

There are other honored descendants in the various lines of whom it would be pleasant to speak if there were time, though I must at least be allowed to mention the name of Miss Maria Louisa Goddard, a member of this chapter, who is the great-granddaughter of the John who is our subject, through John and Mary (Langdon) and their son Charles, but enough has been said to show that the Revolutionary hero was justified in devoting himself to the bringing up of his sixteen children. The town records show that he

was an active, patriotic and useful citizen. He was for a long series of years the moderator of the annual town meeting, being for some reason, after 1779, always called Captain Goddard. He must have gone almost directly from Dorchester Heights to his farm, for on March 11th he was made one of the assessors of Brookline. On May 20th he was "Chosen to Serve for and Represent sd Town in sd Great & General Assembly," and the purpose of appointing such a man is seen in the vote at once passed, "to advise the Person, if Chosen to Represent this Town in the next General Court, that if the Hon. Congress Should, for the Safety of the American Colonies, Declare them Independent of the Kingdom of Great Britain, that we Sd Inhabitants will Solemnly engage with our Lives and fortune to support them in the measure." The ring of this vote makes one suspect that the sturdy John had a hand in forging it. He seems also to have been much interested in the Church, for in nearly every case in which the town passed a vote concerning it or the minister, Mr. Goddard was the one, or one of those selected to execute the measure. The Parish records show that he was also frequently chosen one of the delegates to accompany the minister to ordinations or installations. He died April 30th, 1816.

There is a wider interest in these two lives than that which comes from this chapter, warm as that is. John and Hannah Goddard are types of the men and women who made New England what it was and, in all that is best, what it is. One understands whence the strength came that drove England out of the country, when one thinks of the thousands of such households that were scattered over the eastern border of this great land, thinking not much about themselves and not realizing what an empire they were helping to found. If only New England had more of them today it would hold its own better against the stream of foreign blood that is now so diluting the old life and which, with its greater fertility, threatens to dispossess the Puritan's children of their ancestral estate. It has been said by one who knew whereof he talked that twelve thousand more die of native parentage than are born, while twenty-five thousand more of foreign parentage are born than die. If we add to this numerical ascendancy the mental and moral inferiority of this new stock, we have double reason to regret that New England is not still full of such folk as John and Hannah Goddard.



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